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A Place to Remember: Using History to Build Community

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must have left an enormous collection of official papers, but there is no indication that such a collection was used, and indeed there is no reference to the use of the university archive save in the chapter on athletics. Robert Parks deserves a better biography.

A Place to Remember: Using History to Build Community, by Robert R. Archibald. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 1999. 224 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$46.00 cloth, \$19.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY CAROL KAMMEN, CORNELL UNIVERSITY

Robert Archibald invites readers of *A Place to Remember* to go along with him on three journeys. In this age of memoir and self-examination, the first is an invitation to join him on his return to Ishpeming, on Michigan's Upper Peninsula, where he was born. Here, where Archibald goes to write, he encounters the ghosts of his own past—some of whom are still quite alive. He examines changes in the community, especially looking at its decline after the iron mine closed, people moved away, and the town acquired its faded quality. He recalls old friends, makes new acquaintances, renews contacts. He ponders his own family's background, his ethnic heritage stemming from both Irish and Italian immigrants, and the complexity of those who have stayed on, continuing lives that he remembers being stuck at one particular time—the time when he left Ishpeming to make his way in the world. In this journey, Archibald mines oral resources: those comments remembered, local phrases, conversations, and investigation of the secrets of the past by means of questioning those who were there, those who had a reason to know, or to have some understanding.

Archibald recounts his own journey from the Upper Peninsula. He attended graduate school in New Mexico and worked there and in Wyoming. He became the director of the Montana Historical Society and finally landed in St. Louis as the CEO and director of the Missouri Historical Society (MHS). His trajectory has been as seeker and student, as employee of a state agency, and currently as the director of a private historical society whose roots go back to an elite private men's organization.

The second journey Archibald takes the reader on concerns Don Carlos DeLassus, a man of the nineteenth century who moved from France and a military career to the New World and to less than satisfactory situations and conditions. Archibald has worked long to figure out DeLassus's trajectory, and we learn about DeLassus as Archibald unfolds his discoveries. In this journey, there are sites to visit—though

they yield relatively little. Most of this story comes from the written record, which of course was never created to be a source but rather comprises the documents of DeLassus's life: letters, official documents, wills.

There is another journey that eclipses these first two in importance; it is the tale of how Archibald and the MHS became involved with St. Louis and how they effected change—important change. This segment of the book takes up two chapters that provide important lessons and ideas for everyone involved in public history, in the historical fortunes of a community, and in the way in which a historical organization can be an agent of change.

In chapters 7 and 8, Archibald discusses his understanding of who a community historian is and how public historians can and should function in today's society. He sees history directly involved with and responsive to current social problems, such as our overreliance on the automobile, suburbanization, white flight from inner cities, the growing gap between economic levels, the decline of downtown. Archibald paints a picture of a historical society responding to these issues, serving as a neutral place where they can be addressed by a wide variety of people, and as a means of bringing people together. He writes that the role of a historical society is to stimulate discussion rather than to determine the truth—or even the facts—of a situation.

In this, Archibald's words remind me of Marc Bloch's comment in *The Historian's Craft*. "A man can wear himself out," wrote Bloch, "in seeking to understand the past, if he is totally ignorant of the present" (43). Bloch goes on to note that "the scholar who has no inclination to observe the men, the things, or the events around him will perhaps deserve the title . . . of a useful antiquarian. He would be wise to renounce all claims to that of a historian" (45).

Chapter 8, "Friends and Colleagues," should be required reading by everyone involved with community history. In St. Louis, whose population has shifted and divided along racial and economic lines, Archibald took over an organization that could be described as elite and boldly led it into important new territory. Because Archibald headed a private organization, although it received some public funding, he needed to compete for public philanthropy. That led him to consider what the organization did and how it reacted to public issues of the day. He wondered why, for example, African Americans did not show up to see intelligent exhibits about the city that featured their role.

Archibald found that exhibiting the history of African Americans was not enough to make them feel welcome. Inclusion needed to go beyond public presentations to involve many segments of the com-

munity in the discussion process that created exhibits. Archibald expanded minority employment from one employee to many. In addition, he looked at MHS's business practices and found almost total reliance on traditional business sources—that is, few minority- or women-run businesses were included or even solicited for bids. The MHS found ways to address these practices by breaking down projects into smaller components and by inviting bids by minority-owned businesses throughout the city. In doing so, Archibald and the MHS made contacts with many of those who were underrepresented in the life of the MHS. Contracts for film and paper led to trust and to MHS's emergence as a leader in St. Louis for the number of minority contracts it makes. Those business contacts led to more diverse involvement in the activities of the MHS.

This chapter is a very important guide for anyone in a historical agency who wants to address community problems. It is a program that takes certain and sure leadership and a commitment that history be a part of the answer, not a mirror of the problems of the past. It is a bold chapter and one not to be missed.

Enjoy a *Place to Remember* for an excursion with Robert Archibald. But read chapters 7 and 8 with a marker in hand, for they will challenge and inspire and then guide all of us to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century.

Places of Grace: The Natural Landscapes of the American Midwest, photographs by Gary Irving, essay by Michael Strutin. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999. 110 pages. \$49.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY JONI L. KINSEY, UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

Places of Grace is a beautiful book. Neatly balanced between a well-written text that explores the varieties of midwestern landscapes and an impressive array of stunning color photographs, *Places of Grace* presents the terrain of the central United States with an unusual range and sensitivity.

Noting that the Midwest is "a place hidden in plain view," a place often misunderstood as monotonous, Strutin and Irving proceed to dispute this myopic idea by revealing its rich offerings. The first half of the book is dominated by Strutin's essay, sprinkled with appropriate photographs by Irving; the second half is entirely pictorial, resplendent with his large and lustrous images, which capture the land's variety and beauty in ways that will impress even the most well-traveled midwesterners.

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